

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAN JO 02071 212202Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 212045Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0262

S E C R E T SAN JOSE 2071

EXDIS

FOR: ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINEXN CS

SUBJECT: CONTINUED TALK OF A COUP

REF: STATE 116934

1. SINCE SAN JOSE 1948, RUMORS OF A COUP -- FIGUERES DIRECTED OR OTHERWISE -- HAVE DIMINISHED SOMEWHAT. PEPE, HAS, HOWEVER, NOW PUBLICLY CALLED FOR BASIC REFORMS IN THE COSTA RICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM THROUGH A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION, LARGELY TO STRENGTHEN THE POWERS OF THE EXECUTIVE (SAN JOSE 2013). ONE COULD READ INTO HIS STRONG LANGUAGE, HOWEVER, THE HINT THAT PRESENT DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES MAY HAVE TO BE INTERRUPTED TO MAKE THE NECESSARY CHANGES, WHICH IS PRECISELY WHAT HE TOLD ME PRIVATELY (SAN JOSE 1862) AND REPEATED TO ME AGAIN DURING A PRIVATE CONVERSATION ON MAY 20 AT HIS FARM, LA LUCHA. FIGUERES SAID THAT HIS PUBLIC STATEMENT WAS INTENDED TO BEGIN PREPARING PUBLIC OPINION TO ACCEPT THE IDEA OF THE NEED FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES.

2. WE ARE NOT NOW CERTAIN HOW FAR ALONG WITH HIS PLANS FIGUERES MAY BE, BUT IT IS OBVIOUS THAT HE HAS GIVEN THE MATTER CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT AND FEELS DEEPLY ABOUT IT. AT THIS MOMENT, HIS STATEMENTS APPEAR TO BE IN THE NATURE OF SOUNDINGS AND WE SEE NO CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF LOGISTICAL

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SECRET

PAGE 02 SAN JO 02071 212202Z

PREPARATIONS FOR ACTION.

3. IN A SPEECH IN PUNTARENAS ON MAY 17, FIGUERES REPORTEDLY ANNOUNCED THAT HE IS NOT A CANDIDATE FOR ELECTION AS PRESIDENT IN 1978 AND DOES NOT WISH TO HAVE THE CONSTITUTION AMENDED TO MAKE THAT POSSIBLE. HE REPEATED HIS CALL FOR OTHER BASIC REFORMS IN THE SYSTEM THROUGH A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION.

4. I AGREE WITH YOU COMPLETELY THAT ANY UPSET OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT IN COSTA RICA WOULD BE A TRAGEDY FOR BOTH THIS COUNTRY AND THE IMAGE OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA. IT WOULD, THEREFORE, ADVERSELY AFFECT OUR OWN INTERESTS IN COSTA RICA AS SET FORTH IN OUR CASP. IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT I SPOKE TO PEPE FIGUERES IN A STRAIGHT FORWARD MANNER ABOUT THE DAMAGE WHICH SUCH A DISRUPTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT HERE WOULD DO TO COSTA RICA AA(SAN JOSE 1862). I REPEATED THIS THEME YESTERDAY. WHILE I MAY HAVE OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO RETURN TO IT WITH FIGUERES, AND PERHAPS TO HIT IT HARDER IF THE DEPARTMENT CONCURS (PARA 4 BELOW), I AGREE THAT AS THE NEXT STEP IT WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS ALSO TO APPROACH HIM THROUGH A RESPECTED OUTSIDE FRIEND. OF THE NAMES YOU SUGGESTED FOR THIS MISSION, I AM INCLINED TO FAVOR BOB WOODWARD OR BEN STEPHANSKY. HOWEVER, OUR FIRST CHOICE WOULD BE SENATOR HUMPHREY, WHO WOULD NOT ONLY BE EFFECTIVE WITH FIGUERES BUT WHOSE VISIT COULD ALSO BE WELL USED TO ACCOMPLISH THE OBJECONVES OF YOUR PARA 5 WITH WHICH I ALSO CONCUR. THIS VISIT SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND WE COULD THEN DECIDE WHETHER SOME FURTHER HIGH-LEVEL VISIT TO SHORE UP ODUBER WOULD BE APPROPRIATE OR NECESSARY. I BELIEVE THAT THE SENATOR'S TRIP COULD BE PEGGED ON ANY PRETEXT, INCLUDING SOME CONGRESSIONAL BUSINESS OR EVEN PERSONAL AFFAIRS.

5. HOWEVER THE APPROACH IS MADE, I BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD MAKE IT VERY CLEAR TO FIGUERES (AND TO ODUBER ALSO) THAT THE USG WOULD INDEED TAKE A VERY DIM VIEW OF ANY EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL ACTION HERE. THIS SHOULD BE COUPLED WITH AS STRONG A STATEMENT AS WE CAN MAKE TO THE EFFECT THAT THE REACTION IN THE U.S. (GOVERNMENT, CONGRESS, PRESS, ETC.) WOULD BE VERY ADVERSE AND THAT WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO  
SECRET

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PAGE 03 SAN JO 02071 212202Z

RECOGNIZE THE NEW OR INTERIM REGIME, AT LEAST NOT UNTIL AFTER EXTENDED CONSIDERATION AND CONSULTATIONS. THE DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE ON THIS POINT WILL BE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE.  
TODMAN

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NNN

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